Meter Readers, Utilities

(0*NET 43-5041.00)

New automated meter-reading systems allow meters to be monitored and billed from a central point, reducing the need for meter readers.

Nature of the Work

Meter readers read electric, gas, water, or steam consumption meters and record the volume used. They serve both residential and commercial consumers, either walking or driving along the designated route. Their duties include inspecting the meters and their connections for any defects or damage, supplying repair and maintenance workers with the necessary information to fix damaged meters, keeping track of the average usage, and recording reasons for any extreme fluctuations in volume.

Meter readers are constantly aware of any abnormal behavior or consumption that might indicate an unauthorized connection. They may turn off service for questionable behavior or nonpayment of charges, and they also are responsible for turning on service for new occupants. These workers usually keep a record of the fact that the meters on which they have completed work have been serviced.

Employment

Meter readers held about 54,000 jobs in 2002. About 43 percent were employed by electric, gas, and water utilities. Most of the rest were employed in local government, reading water meters or meters for other government-owned utilities.

Job Outlook

Employment of meter readers is expected to decline through 2012. New automated meter reading (AMR) systems allow meters to be monitored and billed from a central point, reducing the need for meter readers. However, because it will be many years before AMR systems can be implemented in all locations, there still will be some openings for meter readers, mainly to replace workers who leave the occupation.

Related Occupations

Other workers responsible for the distribution and control of utilities include powerplant operators, distributors, and dispatchers.

Sources of Additional Information

Information about job opportunities may be obtained from local employers and local offices of the State employment service.

(See the introduction to the section on material-recording, -scheduling, -dispatching, and -distributing occupations for information on working conditions, training requirements, and earnings.)